

VZCZCXRO5701
RR RUEHCHI RUEHFK RUEHHM RUEHKS RUEHNAG RUEHPB
DE RUEHVK #0102/01 2621020
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 181020Z SEP 08
FM AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
INFO RUEABND/DEA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHZU/ASIAN PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION COLLECTIVE
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0001
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 1098

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 VLADIVOSTOK 000102

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: ADDICTION, SMUGGLING, AND CRIME IN THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST

VLADIVOSTO 00000102 001.2 OF 002

11. Summary. Speakers at a drug prevention conference discussed the challenges involved in fighting drug use and trafficking in the Russian Far East, an area with higher-than-average drug use and drug-related crime, and that is rife with smuggling. A predominant theme throughout the conference was the need for increased international cooperation with Russia's Asian neighbors, support for which was evidenced by the participation of several Asian representatives, including a large Chinese delegation.

Extensive International Participation

12. The Primorye Kray Administration, the Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) and Far Eastern State University (FESU) organized a conference titled "Drug Addiction and Crime Prevention in the Asia-Pacific Region" September 9-10 in Vladivostok. The event attracted about 350 participants from Russia and neighboring countries, and included GOR representatives, scientists, doctors, and NGO representatives as speakers. Organizers of the event emphasized the need for international cooperation in drug interdiction. Speakers included a Chinese researcher, a Korean social worker and the Japanese Consul General, and attendees included a group of about 25 government and academic experts from China.

----- --
Primorye Drug Rates Higher Than Russian Average
----- --

13. Major General Aleksandr Beklemishev, Head of the Russian Far East Division of the FDCS, painted a grim picture of the drug situation in the Russian Far East, noting that drug-related crime and usage statistics for the region remained considerably higher than national levels. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, during the first half of 2008, drug related-crimes were 31 percent more common in the Russian Far East than elsewhere in Russia (112 per one hundred thousand residents compared to 86), and drug addiction was 19 percent more prevalent (292 registered drug addicts per 100 thousand residents compared to 245). However, Vladimir Kurilov, Rector of FESU reported that official data are inaccurate, and that the real addiction rate is likely 1.5 to 2 times higher than in the rest of Russia.

14. In addition, Authorities confiscate eight to nine tons of marijuana, 300 to 350 kilos of hashish, and 100-120 kilos of hashish oil in the RFE Federal District annually. FDCS officers have destroyed several tons of cannabis plants and made 847 heroin confiscations so far this year in the region.

15. Primorye Governor Sergey Darkin also spoke, making sure to point out his Kray Administration cooperates extensively with the FDCS, and has allotted 82 million rubles (USD 3.4 million) towards its 2005-2010 "Primorye without Drugs" prevention

program.

China a Major Factor in Far East Drug Trade

¶6. General Beklemishev also stated that his agency has seen a sharp increase in the amount of cross-border trafficking, with registered smuggling cases rising steadily from only 14 in 2004 to 85 in 2007. Primorye and Amurskaya Oblasts in particular continue to experience high levels of smuggling due to their locations along the China border.

¶7. Aleksandr Rolik, Head of Primorye Regional FDCS, stressed the international aspects of the problem. He stated that Primorye-based smugglers direct their product toward China, taking advantage of the higher prices that cannabis-based drugs fetch there. Rolik made a point of emphasizing that increased cooperation between his officers and counterparts from Japan, the Republic of Korea and China have been instrumental in the past, and must continue to grow. He used as an example cooperation with Japanese authorities that destroyed the main opiate transit route from Central Asia to Japan in the late nineties.

Official Points Finger at U.S.

¶8. Aleksandr Fyodorov, Deputy Director of the FDCS, pointed to Afghanistan as the main cause of the increased global drug trade, noting that the country's production of opium increased from 42 tons 1984 to 8,100 tons in 2007. He wondered aloud why drug production has experienced such a large surge in Afghanistan, despite the U.S. and NATO military presence there. [Note: His implied sentiment echoed a February Channel One TV

VLADIVOSTO 00000102 002.2 OF 002

broadcast that more directly alleged that the U.S. actively encourages drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Europe. End Note.]

Comment

¶9. The conference was an encouraging sign that the Russia is searching to improve international collaboration among Pacific Rim neighbors in its fight against illegal drugs. Though the clear focus was on China -- which sent a large delegation and was referred to extensively by many speakers -- it is important to note that Afghanistan is also a key concern and that an undercurrent of blaming the U.S. for Russia's drug woes is never far from the surface.

ARMBRUSTER